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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON IRAQIS IN JORDAN - AUGUST 22

REF: AMMAN 3369 AND PREVIOUS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Foreign Minster Khatib confirmed that the Governments of Iraq and Jordan agreed in principle to implement a process for issuing visas to Iraqis seeking to enter Jordan. Jordanian schools began on August 19, though with far fewer Iraqis than expected. USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR and NGOs are collaborating with the Ministry of Education and consulting focus groups of Iraqis to ascertain why. They will use their results to develop continued information campaigns that will encourage Iraqi schoolchildren to enroll before registration closes on September 15. END SUMMARY

Visas to Jordan  
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12. (SBU) Foreign Minister Khatib confirmed to the Ambassador on August 20 that the Governments of Jordan and Iraq agreed to an arrangement during Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwaffaq al-Rubaie's visit to Amman whereby the GOI will submit visa applications for processing in Amman, allowing Iraqi travelers to know with certainty before departing Iraq that they can enter Jordan. FM Khatib indicated that details of the process remain to be worked out.

13. (U) On August 15, Al Arab Al Yawm reported that the Jordanian Foreign Minister directed the formation of a technical team to explore the feasibility of issuing entry visas in Baghdad. News reports also stated that the Iraqi Foreign Ministry would initially receive visa requests and would coordinate with Jordanian security authorities to determine entry in Jordan.

Schools open, but with fewer Iraqis enrolled than expected  
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14. (SBU) A variety of sources - the Ministry of Education (MoE), UNICEF, UNHCR, and NGOs who work with Iraqis in Jordan - have confirmed that the number of Iraqis currently attending Jordanian public schools is significantly below the 50,000 anticipated by the GOJ. MoE Director of Schools reported to Emboff that the Ministry does not yet have specific enrollment figures for Iraqis, but expects to receive lists from school principals within two weeks. In a published interview on August 19, Minister of Education Touqan said that 40,000 Iraqis would enroll during the coming academic year, notably the first time a ministry official used a figure below 50,000. An August 15 interview with Iraqi Embassy officials in Amman claimed that the Iraqi Embassy's cultural office had notarized 6,000 educational records for Iraqis in Jordan.

15. (SBU) Emboffs, UNICEF officials, and Save the Children met with focus groups of Iraqis the week of August 19 to understand displaced Iraqi educational concerns and to inform the continued public information campaign being managed by

UNICEF, NGOs and the Ministry of Education. Several themes emerged:

--Despite assurances from the MoE that all schools, even those that are full, would record the names of children wishing to register, it is not happening in practice. Iraqis are being told by some local school officials that no space is available.

--Some Iraqi families lack funds to pay school fees (20 JD/semester for primary school; 30JD/semester for secondary school) or textbooks (35 JD). Iraqi families remain largely unaware of the UN offer to pay fees on their behalf.

--Some Iraqi children have been out of formal schooling for a year or more and believe they are no longer eligible for school, are no longer interested in school, or are working (often illegally) to support their families.

¶6. (SBU) Save the Children and Mercy Corps are collecting names of schools that are not registering children and will pass these lists to the MoE through the Ministry of Planning.

¶7. (SBU) Emboff met with the MoE steering committee on August 16, where the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Planning accepted a list of 30 schools identified by USAID, UN and NGO partners in East Amman as suitable for double-shifting. NOTE: although Iraqis may attend any school with available space, many Jordanian schools are already overcrowded and Iraqis living in Amman are concentrated in neighborhoods with overcrowded schools. To provide sufficient space, the GoJ agreed to double-shift schools in key areas (reftel). END NOTE. The MoE agreed to send a letter to all school directorates and the principals of the schools selected for double-shifting on August 20 to clarify registration rules and processes:

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--Iraqi children should bring educational documents within six weeks of the start of school. Those lacking documentation will be tested and sorted into classes commensurate with their educational level.

--Schools should register all Iraqi children, regardless of space, and the MoE will determine the actual distribution within the coming weeks.

--Schools should register Iraqi children regardless of their ability to pay registration and textbook fees. Following registration, the MoE will transmit a list of Iraqis to UNHCR and UNICEF, which will reimburse the GOJ for their educational costs.

Registration

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¶8. (SBU) UNHCR reported to poloff that as of August 16 it had registered 43,168 individuals in Jordan - referring 3,114 to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for resettlement consideration.

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